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Olin to unearth buried batteries

HAMDEN ^{EPA} An agreement between the state and the Olin Corp. to remove flashlight batteries buried at a former dump site here is the first phase of an estimated \$1.5 million cleanup effort by the company.

Company and state Department of Environmental Protection officials said Monday they could not estimate how long the overall cleanup would take, though an Olin spokesman said removal of the batteries should take eight to 10 months.

Olin, which has owned the Powder Farm property since the turn of the century, will be studying the site for other soil and ground-water pollution in order to set up a plan for cleaning up other wastes there, the company said Monday.

"We're expecting to clean up the whole site," said Alec Houston, Olin public relations manager. "How many phases (of the cleanup) there will be will be determined after we've taken further steps."

A consent order signed Friday by DEP Commissioner Stanley Pac states that Olin, a Stamford-based manufacturing company, will first remove about 3,500 cubic yards of buried flashlight batteries on the 102-acre site.

The property, off Leeder Hill Road, is also known as the Pine Swamp. The Powder Farm name refers to the gunpowder that was once stored there when the manufacturing company ran a New Haven rifle and shotgun division, Winchester Repeating Arms.

Other wastes found on the sites in two previous studies include wood and cement debris, incinerator ash and some chemicals from the company's former chemical research laboratories in New Haven, according to Richard Mason, principal sanitary engineer with the DEP's water compliance unit.

Mason said the state has considered the batteries hazardous because lead has shown up in

ground water studies, even though it's not clear the lead comes from the batteries.

"The records of what's been disposed on the site are somewhat sketchy," he said.

The South Central Regional Water Authority said Monday that past dumping at the Powder Farm should not affect water in the adjacent Lake Whitney reservoir.

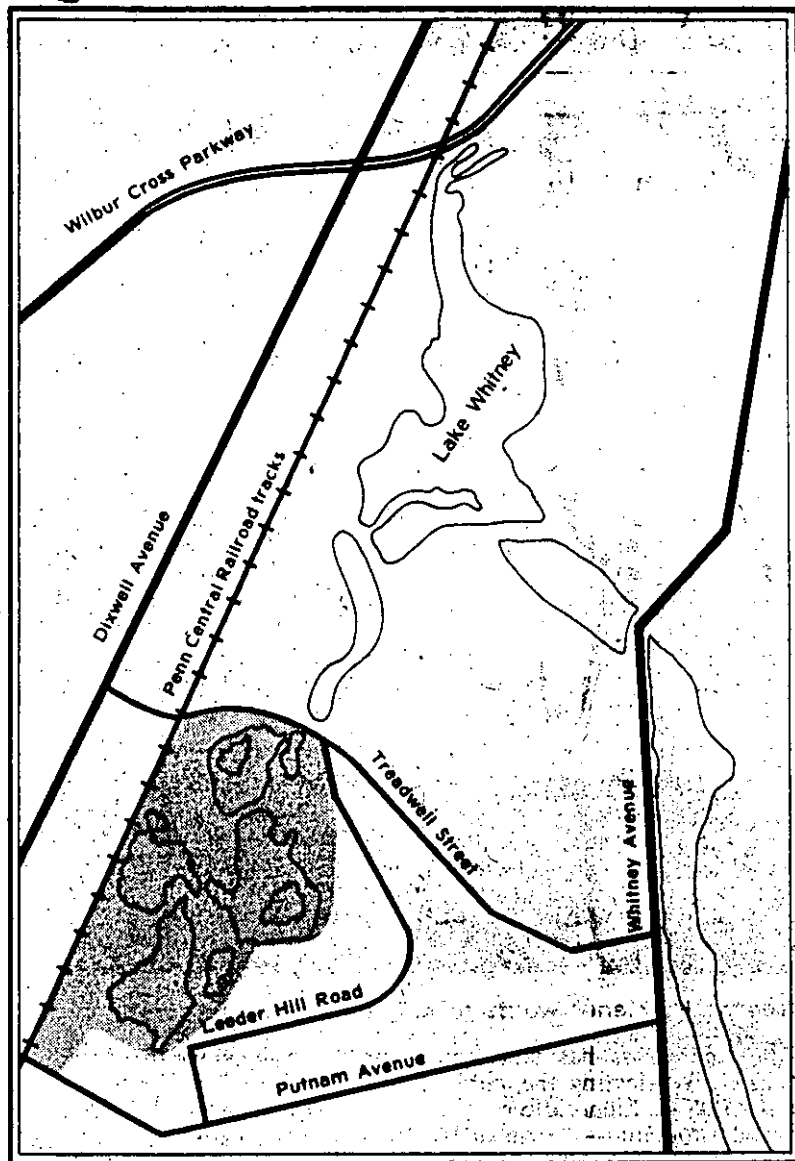
Water from the ponds on the site flows into the reservoir, but tests during the past five years have not showed any evidence of contamination, said Frances Ludwig, authority deputy director of engineering for water quality and research.

Richard McHugh, authority executive director, said cleaning up the site should not contaminate Lake Whitney in any way. Water authority personnel will monitor the removal of dirt from the site, McHugh said. Hundreds of tests have been performed in the reservoir over the past five years, near the Powder Farm ponds and the water inlet farther south, he said.

Two to three volatile organic compounds and metals were found in ground water under the site, but no harmful chemicals were turned up in surface water samples, Ludwig said.

"The intent of the whole cleanup is to make the ground water on the property of drinking water standards," said Mason of the DEP. "We want to clean up the ground water so that it does not affect the reservoir in the future." He added that "interceptor wells" are planned for the area to pump out contaminated ground water.

Clean Sites Inc., a non-profit corporation founded by a coalition of industrial, environmental and public interest groups, will act as a "neutral observer" to make sure the that cleanup studies are consistent with federal



Staff illustration by Ann Spencer Dallas

The shaded area shows the location of the former dump site and state criteria, according to Olin.

In 1978, town officials expressed interest in purchasing the site for recreation use before the federal Environmental Protection Agency listed the area as a potential hazardous waste dump site.

Olin dumped wastes at the site from about World War II until the former Hamden Health Department ordered the activity stopped in 1966. The dumping

occurred before it was prohibited by federal law.

Some chemicals that have been identified at the site include tetrahydrofuran, used in the manufacture of cellophane, and tertiary butyl alcohol, used for cellophane manufacture and gasoline, according to Houston.

Mayor John DeNicola Jr. said he could not comment on the cleanup effort because he had not seen the agreement between the state and Olin.